

TAR SPOT OF FICUS

W. H. Ridings

A commonly occurring black leaf spot disease of *Ficus* spp., referred to as tar spot, may be caused by several species of the fungus *Ophiostoma* (*O. fici* E. A. Bessey, *O. floridanum* Chardon, and *O. galophilia* Syd.). Only *O. fici* and *O. floridanum* are reported from Florida with *O. fici* being the most frequently encountered (1,2,4,5). Besides producing an unsightly appearance on the leaves, this disease may result in premature leaf drop.

SYMPTOMS. Leaf spots are raised, uneven, shiny black stromatic (fungal) masses ranging from 1 to 10 mm in diameter, which are evident on both leaf surfaces. The spots may occur singly or in groups. On the upper leaf surface, the raised tar spots may remain covered by the leaf cuticle, giving a whitish border to the spots. On the lower leaf surface, the tar spots have a yellow halo.

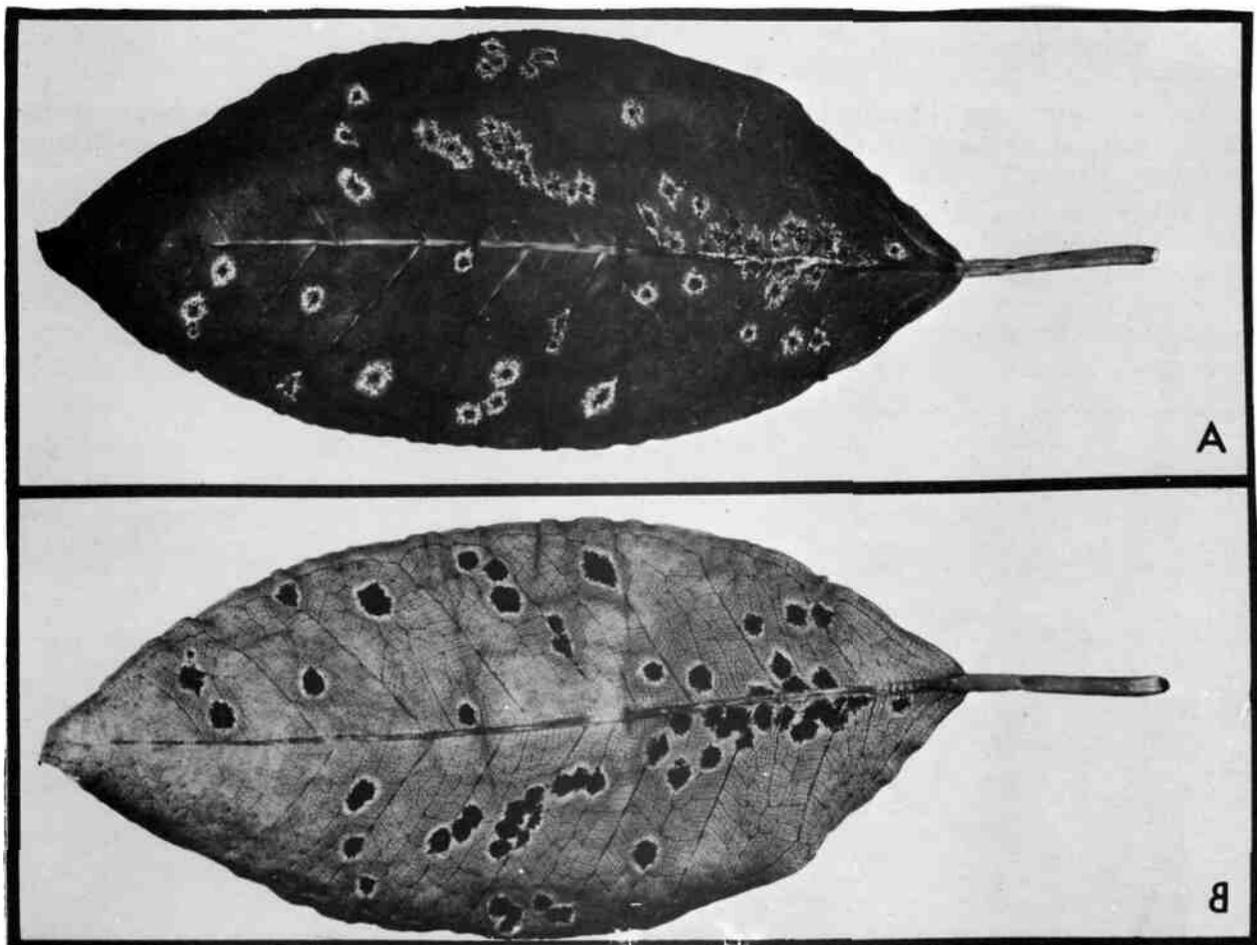


Fig. 1. Tar spot disease of *Ficus bengalensis*: A) upper leaf surface; B) lower leaf surface.

HOST RANGE. This leaf spot disease has been reported from Florida on *Ficus altissima* Blume, *F. aurea* Nutt., *F. bengalensis* L., and *F. tinctoria* Foster (4). Other *Ficus* spp. on which tar spot has been found include *F. jimenezii* Standl. from Costa Rica (3) .

DISTRIBUTION. Besides its occurrence in Florida, tar spot of *Ficus* has been reported from Cuba, Costa Rica, and Puerto Rico (1,3,4).

CONTROL. Besides collecting and destroying diseased leaves, control with protective fungicides such as maneb or fixed copper may be necessary.

#### Literature Cited

1. Bessey, Ernst A. 1919. An undescribed species of *Ophiostoma* on *Ficus*. *Mycologica* 11:55-57.
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